

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1                   1. A method for conducting an online auction of a monetary amount for  
 2 a specified item or category of items, the method comprising:  
 3                   receiving at a computer site at least one bid having a discount rate for  
 4 the specified item or category of items being auctioned from a plurality of sellers  
 5 registered to participate in the auction;  
 6                   receiving at the computer site a commitment to buy an undiscounted  
 7 value amount of the item or an undiscounted value amount within the specified  
 8 category of items at a minimum discount rate from at least one buyer registered to  
 9 participate in the auction; and  
 10                  declaring at least one successful seller of the value amount for the  
 11 specified item or category of items based on the bid from the successful seller or  
 12 sellers having the greatest discount rate greater than or equal to the minimum  
 13 discount rate and best meeting the buyer's individual conditions.

1                   2. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein a commitment to buy an  
 2 undiscounted value amount at a minimum discount rate is received from each of a  
 3 plurality of buyers and wherein the method further comprises pooling the plurality  
 4 of buyers to obtain various pooled award amounts and wherein the at least one  
 5 successful seller is declared of his respective pooled award amount for the specified  
 6 item or category of items.

1                   3. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the items are products.

1                   4. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the items are services.

1                   5. The method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the plurality of buyers are  
 2 independent and/or unrelated.

1                   6. The method as claimed in claim 2 further comprising receiving at the  
 2 computer site information representing a minimum award amount or predefined  
 3 sequence of minimum award amounts corresponding to a predefined sequence of

4 discount bids that each seller is willing to accept from the pooled buyers for a given  
5 category.

1 7. The method as claimed in claim 2 further comprising receiving at the  
2 computer site information representing a maximum award amount that a seller is  
3 capable of accepting and willing to accept from the pooled buyers.

1 8. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising receiving at the  
2 computer site information representing a method of guaranteeing the value amount  
3 from the at least one buyer.

1 9. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein at least one seller is pre-  
2 approved to sell the specified item or category of items.

1 10. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising receiving  
2 at the computer site information representing any sellers unacceptable to the at least  
3 one buyer.

1 11. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the computer site is  
2 a Web site.

1 12. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the auction is a  
2 reverse auction.

1 13. The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the auction ends a  
2 fixed period of time after the auction begins.

1 14. The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising receiving  
2 at the computer site a command from the at least one buyer to try to end the auction  
3 for the at least one buyer wherein a successful seller of the value amount for the at  
4 least one buyer can be declared before the preset auction expiration time.

1           15.    The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising receiving  
2   at the computer site a command from the at least one buyer to try to end the auction  
3   for the at least one buyer wherein a successful seller of the value amount for the at  
4   least one buyer can be declared before the end of the auction.

1           16.    The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the successful seller  
2   is determined by the buyer's pre-defined conditions.

1           17.    The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the seller with the  
2   highest bid for discount rate is the successful seller.

1           18.    The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein there is more than one  
2   successful seller for a given auction.

1           19.    The method as claimed in claim 1 wherein a buyer account is  
2   assigned to the registered buyer.

1           20.    The method as claimed in claim 19 wherein the buyer account  
2   includes various inter-linked sub-accounts.

1           21.    The method as claimed in claim 20 wherein the sub-accounts are  
2   linked to at least one external account of the registered buyer held by a financial  
3   institution.

1           22.    The method as claimed in claim 21 wherein the buyer's funds  
2   can be transferred between the various sub-accounts and also between the sub-  
3   accounts and external accounts held by other financial institutions.

1           23.    The method as claimed in claim 22 wherein the registered buyer  
2   can transfer funds or reassign buying power amounts to the account of another  
3   registered buyer or a registered seller.

1                    32.     A computer site for conducting an online auction of a monetary  
2     amount for a specified category of items, the computer site comprising:  
3                    a set of related documents and associated files; and

4 a server for serving up the set of related documents and associated files  
 5 to a plurality of I/O devices to provide buyers and sellers with capability to  
 6 participate in the auction, the server being programmed with application software to:  
 7 receive at least one bid having a discount rate for the specified item or  
 8 category of items being auctioned from a plurality of sellers registered to participate  
 9 in the auction;  
 10 receive a commitment to buy an undiscounted value amount of the item  
 11 or an undiscounted value amount within the specified category of items at a  
 12 minimum discount rate from at least one buyer registered to participate in the  
 13 auction; and  
 14 declare a successful seller of the value amount for the specified item or  
 15 category of items based on a bid from the successful seller or sellers having the  
 16 greatest discount rate greater than or equal to the minimum discount rate and best  
 17 meeting the buyer's individual conditions.

1 33. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein a commitment  
 2 to buy an undiscounted value amount at a minimum discount rate is received from  
 3 each of a plurality of buyers and wherein the server is further programmed to pool  
 4 the plurality of buyers to obtain various pooled award amounts and wherein the at  
 5 least one successful seller is declared his respective pooled award amount for the  
 6 specified category of items.

1 34. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the items are  
 2 products.

1 35. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the items are  
 2 services.

1 36. The computer site as claimed in claim 33 wherein the plurality  
 2 of buyers are independent and/or unrelated.

1 37. The computer site as claimed in claim 33 further comprising  
 2 receiving at the computer site information representing a minimum award amount

3 or predefined sequence of minimum award amounts corresponding to a predefined  
4 sequence of discount bids that each seller is willing to accept from the pooled buyers  
5 for a given category.

1 38. The computer site as claimed in claim 33 further comprising  
2 receiving at the computer site information representing a maximum award amount  
3 that a seller is capable of accepting and willing to accept from the pooled buyers.

1 39. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the server is  
2 further programmed to receive information representing a method of guaranteeing  
3 the value amount from the at least one buyer.

1 40. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein at least one  
2 seller is pre-approved to sell the specified item or category of items.

1 41. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the server is  
2 further programmed to receive information representing any sellers unacceptable to  
3 the at least one buyer.

1 42. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the computer  
2 site is a Web site.

1 43. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the auction is  
2 a reverse auction.

1 44. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the auction  
2 ends a fixed period of time after the auction begins.

1 45. The computer site as claimed in claim 32 further comprising  
2 receiving at the computer site a command from the at least one buyer to try to end  
3 the auction for the at least one buyer wherein a successful seller of the value amount  
4 for the at least one buyer can be declared before the preset auction expiration time.

1           46.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the server is  
2 further programmed to receive a command from the at least one buyer to try to end  
3 the auction for the at least one buyer wherein a successful seller of the value amount  
4 for the at least one buyer can be declared before the end of the auction.

1           47.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the successful  
2 seller is determined by the buyer's pre-defined conditions.

1           48.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the seller with  
2 the highest bid for discount rate is the successful seller.

1           49.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein there is more  
2 than one successful seller for a given auction.

1           50.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein a buyer  
2 account is assigned to the registered buyer.

1           51.    The computer site as claimed in claim 50 wherein the buyer  
2 account includes various inter-linked sub-accounts.

1           52.    The computer site as claimed in claim 51 wherein the sub-  
2 accounts are linked to at least one external account of the registered buyer held by  
3 a financial institution.

1           53.    The computer site as claimed in claim 52 wherein the buyer's  
2 funds can be transferred between the various sub-accounts and also between the sub-  
3 accounts and external accounts held by other financial institutions.

1           54.    The computer site as claimed in claim 53 wherein the registered  
2 buyer can transfer funds or reassign buying power amounts to the account of another  
3 registered buyer or a registered seller.

1           55.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein a seller  
2           account is assigned to each registered seller.

1           56.    The computer site as claimed in claim 55 wherein the seller  
2           account includes various inter-linked sub-accounts.

1           57.    The computer site as claimed in claim 56 wherein the sub-  
2           accounts are linked to at least one external account of the at least one seller held by  
3           a financial institution.

1           58.    The computer site as claimed in claim 57 wherein the seller's  
2           funds can be transferred between the various sub-accounts and also between the sub-  
3           accounts and external accounts held by other financial institutions.

1           59.    The computer site as claimed in claim 58 wherein the at least one  
2           registered seller can transfer funds or reassign buying power amounts to the account  
3           of another registered buyer or a registered seller.

1           60.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the server is  
2           further programmed to receive a bidding table for at least one seller in which the at  
3           least one seller commits to a sequence of bids corresponding to a sequence of value  
4           amounts for a given category.

1           61.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein each of the  
2           sellers is pre-approved to sell the specified item or category of items.

1           62.    The computer site as claimed in claim 32 wherein the auction  
2           ends an undetermined period of time after the auction begins.

1           63.    A computer-implemented auction system for negotiating discount  
2           credits between sellers offering at least one pre-defined category of goods or service  
3           items and buyers wishing to purchase goods or service items selected from said  
4           category, comprising:



5 an auction system that presents a first interface for access by buyers in  
6 communicating willingness to purchase items selected from a pre-defined category  
7 at a negotiated category discount and a second interface for access by sellers in  
8 communicating willingness to offer items selected from the pre-defined category;

9 the first interface including a commitment amount field through which  
10 each buyer communicates the amount that buyer will commit to spend and a  
11 requested discount field through which each buyer communicates the smallest  
12 discount that buyer will accept;

13 a data storage associated with the auction engine for storing the identity  
14 of buyers who have communicated willingness to purchase items from the pre-  
15 defined category, and for storing bid data indicative of the commitment amount and  
16 requested discount communicated by each buyer;

17 the auction system further having a compilation system that analyzes the  
18 bid data to present information to sellers through the second interface indicative of  
19 the aggregate commitment amounts associated with different requested discounts;

20 the second interface having a discount offer field through which each  
21 seller communicates the discount that seller is willing to offer;

22 a commitment system having a mechanism for terminating negotiation  
23 in response to a pre-defined criterion and for identifying a selected seller that has  
24 offered the greatest discount during the negotiation;

25 the commitment system communicating with the auction system to  
26 generate a discount record for at least a portion of the buyers identified in the data  
27 store, each discount record including the identity of the buyer and seller, the pre-  
28 defined category on which the buyer negotiated and data indicative of the  
29 commitment amount and the discount offered by the selected seller.